

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 00199 142152Z

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2078

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV PINT PP

SUBJ: PNG NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

1. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT TNETATIVE SCHEDULE FOR COMING ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL PARLIAMENT CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO OPEN MARCH 18 AND CONTINUE UNTIL APRIL 16. THE VOTING PERIOD WILL BE MAY 28-JUNE 18. WRITS WILL BE RETURNED ON JULY 9 AND THE FIRST NATIONAL PARLIAMENT. AFTER ELECTION WILL SIT ON JULY 25. WHILE THESE DATES ARE INDICATIVE OF PLANNING AT THIS TIME, THEY MAY VARY IN EACH INSTANCE BY MORE THAN A WEEK.

2. WHILE WE ARE BUT IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF CAMPAIGNING, SPECULATION REGARDING THE NEXT COALITION GOVERNMENT IS RAMPANT. TWO SCENARIOS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED, THE FIRST OF WHICH AT THIS TIME IS MORE PROBABLE THAN THE SECOND. IT SHOULD BE STRONGLY EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LACK OF IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT WITHIN IEACH OF THE PARTIES, THE FACT THAT PERHAPS 40-50 PERCENT OF THE CURRENTLY SITTING PARLIAMENT WILL NOT BE RETURNED, THE LACK OF IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THE INFLUENCE OF SIGNIFICANT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 PORT M 00199 142152Z

PERSONALITIES WITHIN EACH OF THE MAJOR PARTIES WHO MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE RETURNED MAKES COMMENT RE FUTURE COALITION EXTREMELY SPECULATIVE.

3. THE FIRST SCENARIO CALLS FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT TO BE COMPOSED OF PANGU PARTY, PEOPLE'S PROGRESS PARTY AND UNITED PARTY. THIS HAS NOT BEEN FORMALLY AGREED TO. THE

SCHEME WOULD NOT BE OPERATIVE IF ONE OF THE THREE PARTIES ACHIEVES A MAJORITY WITHIN THE PARLIAMENT. BUT IF NO ONE PARTY ACHIEVES A MAJORITY, A COALITION OF THE THREE WOULD BE FORMED HEADED BY MICHAEL SOMARE AS PRIME MINISTER. THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE DRAWN FROM EITHER THE PPP OR UNITED PARTY, DEPENDING ON WHICH ELECTED THE MOST MEMBERS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WOULD EITHER BE JULIUS CHAN (PPP) OR TEI ABAL (UNITED PARTY). MINISTERS FROM ALL THREE PARTIES WOULD BE APPOINTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NUMBER OF ELECTED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM EACH PARTY. THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO DESIGNATE WHICH PORTFOLIOS WOULD GO TO EACH PARTY, BUT THE LEADER OF THE UNITED PARTY OR PPP COULD VETO ANY MINISTER SUGGESTED FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES. JULIUS CHAN WOULD RETAIN THE FINANCE PORTFOLIO. THE PRIMARY BENEFIT OF THE PROPOSED COALITION AS VIEWED FROM PANGU IS THAT IT WOULD ASSURE GOOD HIGHLANDS REPRESENTATION BY BRINGING UNITED PARTY INTO THE COALITION. AN UNSPOKEN BUT OBVIOUS ADVANTAGE IS THAT IN THE EVENT OF A SHARP DECLINE IN PPP AND PANGU REPRESENTATION IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT, THIS COALITION WOULD KEEP THOSE PARTIES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT.

4. A SECOND SCENARIO, WHICH WE BELIEVE WOULD BE IMPROBABLE BUT NEVERTHELESS A POSSIBILITY, IS THAT THE UNITED PARTY WILL FORM A COALITION WITH PAPUAN MEMBERS. THE DEAL AS ENVISIONED WOULD CALL FOR A UNITED PARTY-PAPUA BESENA/PAPUA MOVEMENT COALITION ALONG WITH INDEPENDENTS. THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS IN THE PRESS THAT THE PAPUAN MOVEMENT, WHICH IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PORT M 00199 142152Z

A PRO-PAPUAN, NON-SECESSIONIST GROUP, WILL SUPPORT UNITED PARTY IF OALA OALA-RARUA IS DESIGNATED PRIME MINISTER. THE UNITED PARTY HAS NO OBJECTIONS TO THIS AND TEI ABAL IS WILLING TO ACCEPT THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER POSITION. THIS COALITION PRE-SUPPOSES THAT UNITED PARTY WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ITS SEATS CONSIDERABLY IN THE NEXT ELECTION, BUT WILL FALL SHORT OF HAVING A 55-MEMBER MAJORITY. (THERE WILL BE 109 SEATS IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT.) IT ALSO PRE-SUPPOSES THAT THE PAPUAN MOVEMENT WILL PICK UP APPROXIMATELY EIGHT SEATS, WHICH IS QUITE PROBABLE.

5. WE BELIEVE THIS SECOND SCENARIO WILL NOT OCCUR EVEN IF UNITED PARTY DOES MANAGE TO GET 45 SEATS OR MORE, BECAUSE UNITED PARTY ITSELF IS FACED WITH A SPLIT WHICH COULD REMOVE FROM 10-12 MEMBERS. ALSO THE RECENT DECISION OF GOVERNOR-GENERAL GUISE TO RESIGN IN ORDER TO CONTEST THE NEXT ELECTIONS DIMINISHES THE PROSPECT OF THIS SCHEME SINCE GUISE AND OALA OALA-RARUA WOULD BE CONTESTING ONE ANOTHER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S SLOT IN THE PROPOSED

UP-PAPUA COALITION. GUISE IS AN INDEPENDENT WHO HAS,
NEVERTHELESS, INDICATED THAT HE PLANS TO AT LEAST NOMINALLY
BOW TOWARDS PAPUA BESENA IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONSOLIDATE THE
PAPUAN VOTE. WHEN GUISE ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION AS GOVERNOR-
GENERAL, HE WAS ATTACKED IN THE PRESS BY OALA OALA-RARUA.
THE LATEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US IS THAT THE PAPUAN
MOVEMENT HAS DISAVOWED OALA OALA-RARUA BECAUSE OF HIS
ANTI-GUISE REMARKS. IF THIS IS CORRECT, IT WOULD LEAVE THE
FIELD TO GUISE AND SOMARE, AND OUR OWN BELIEVE AT THIS
TIME IS THAT SOMARE WOULD PREVAIL.
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